

NEW YORK'S STREET TRAFFIC PROBLEM

PLANS FOR RELIEVING CONGESTION AT HERALD SQUARE AND AT FIFTH AVE. AND 42ND ST.

WATER on all sides, prevented from growing in any direction save upward, crowded Manhattan Island begins to bridge her difficulties as the only solution to the problem of maintaining her present high speed of travel without a noticeable death list. Two bridges and one tunnel are now under consideration by the city engineers to relieve the congested travel at certain populous points, and the indications point toward the final adoption of the plans.

One bridge is proposed for the intersection of Forty-second street and Fifth avenue, another across Park row to the Brooklyn Bridge entrance more pretentious than the one at present occupying that position, and a tunnel is designed for the perilous intersection of Thirty-fourth street with Broadway and Sixth avenue at Herald square. At this point, owing to the elevated structure which runs down Sixth avenue, it is not possible to build a bridge, and the tunnel solution was deemed to be the only way.

The plans for this improvement emanate from the office of the Bureau of Highways, under the general supervision of Jacob A. Cantor, President of the Borough of Manhattan, and the immediate supervision of Principal Assistant Engineer Wisner Martin. He proposes to send the tracks of the Broadway street cars through a tunnel which, deflected from the street, will disappear under Herald square and reappear at the other side of Thirty-fourth street at Greeley square.

There will be a passenger platform under ground for the distance of a block, from Thirty-fourth street to Thirty-third street, with stairways leading down to it from the Thirty-fourth street corner and from the Thirty-third street corner, on the east side, while stairways from an aisle of safety in the center of the street, where the Broadway tracks now run, will afford entrance to and exit from the downtown Broadway cars in the tunnel. The platform is to be long enough to permit three cars to stand along its length at one time.

The Thirty-fourth street car tracks and the Sixth avenue surface tracks are to remain as they are. Mr. Martin, the engineer in charge, said of the proposed plan:

Mr. Martin on the Plan.

"Something should be done to relieve the congestion of travel at Thirty-fourth street. With the three car lines crossing that point practically at one place and the great increase in travel owing to the presence of the new buildings of the uptown department stores, the street becomes a tangle in the side. It is impossible to get the surface cars along at a better rate of speed when only a certain number of them can shuttlecock their way through the line of cars which are ever waiting for the flagman's signal to help them over the difficulty.

"With the Broadway cars out of the way

PROPOSED TUNNEL FOR BROADWAY CARS UNDER HERALD AND GREELEY SQUARES

the congestion would disappear, and the tunnel solution is the only way. There is a difficulty in that. The office of the Commissioner of Public Works informed me when this scheme was first talked of that no project would be accepted providing for a tunnel under Broadway, for the reason that the branch of the subway one day to be completed is projected to run down Broadway from the bend at Forty-second street, connecting with the main line at Union square.

"Of course, that defeats the simple and direct idea of lowering the Broadway tracks in the line in which they now travel and made necessary the curve into Herald square and the curve out of Greeley square for the tunnel. That leaves Broadway free for the subway down to Thirty-fourth street. But there comes the difficulty.

"The surface car tunnel crosses the street there and the subway tunnel cannot be expected to dip under it. But there is a solution to that involving a slight depression of the subway. It can run down Sixth avenue parallel with the Broadway tunnel and then turn again into the avenue under the surface cars when they come to earth again in front of the bank building.

"It seems to be the only solution to the problem, for clearly the main thoroughfare of the city is not wide enough to

permit of two subways, even for a distance of three squares.

"One of the new bridges proposed to relieve traffic congestion is to be in the Campanile terminal of the Brooklyn Bridge. When the new thirty million dollar scheme to furnish the various departments of the municipal government with an office building in order to avoid paying rent for the scattered departments now housed wherever they happen to be able to find quarters is completed and the Second avenue elevated line is enabled to swing around into the Bridge and across it without compelling the passengers to change cars there will be a pedestrian bridge leading from City Hall Park to the Bridge entrance. It will be larger than the one now spanning the street, but will resemble it in location and purpose. Mr. Lindenthal is quoted as saying that the structure will be erected, is the most densely traveled spot on the face of the globe, and as the city grows it is bound

to be worse. More than three hundred thousand persons travel that way daily."

The Forty-Second Street Bridge.

But the prettiest bridge and one which the Board of Estimate and Apportionment will pass upon shortly is the one proposed across Forty-second street at Fifth avenue. The plan originated with Mr. Thomas Hastings, architect, who put his idea on paper, and the credit for the engineering work belongs to Mr. Wisner Martin.

The plan is to lower Forty-second street and raise Fifth avenue, which will cross above Forty-second street on a handsome bridge, that will be a permanent adornment to the city and relieve to some extent the monotony of long, unchanging street scenes, as is done in other cities. Engineers claim that it is a perfect solution to the problem of the congestion of traffic at this intersection, and the fact that it removes the street railway tracks from Fifth avenue should alone justify it.

Both Forty-second street and Fifth avenue come to the top of a hill at this intersection.

Illinois and Mr. Cleveland.

THE political cry of the time of Tilden. "Turn the rascals out," is being revived in certain quarters. An old Washington holdover, who came up from the national capital the other day, said that he well remembered how, after Cleveland's first election, many tourists about the capital used to ask in all seriousness to be shown the "Rascal Department" in making their rounds.

"I remember a story that 'Bishop' Oberly, who was Cleveland's Indian Commissioner, told me in connection with the hunters which I never saw in print. Illinois had come down on Cleveland like a wolf on the fold. All the democrats in that State seemed to want something right away. They seemed to think that because Cleveland was nominated in Chicago the State owned him.

"A delegation of sightseers, and, incidentally, office hunters, called upon Oberly, who was a big hearted fellow, and they made the usual remark about the 'rascals' who had been turned out, as they hoped. At the window of their call they asked Mr. Oberly to take them to the White House. They wanted to shake hands with Grover. The democrats made very free with the President's name after he was

in. They always called him Grover when he was absent. The 'Bishop,' always anxious to oblige the constituents of his old State, rounded them up and led them in procession to the mansion. Cleveland, this day, liked Oberly personally, and he had the entrée at all hours. Dan Lamont never stopped him. On this occasion the 'Bishop' left his Illinoisians in Lamont's room while he walked in upon the President unannounced. The President greeted him cordially and asked, 'What can I do for you to-day, Bishop?' The Indian Commissioner explained that he had a herd of Illinoisians penned up in Lamont's room waiting to be turned in.

"Turned in?" asked the President.

"Yes, Mr. President, that's what I said."

"But, Bishop, you forget that we are pledged to turn the rascals out," said the President, trying to be very serious.

"For a moment the 'Bishop' was stunned, but he soon saw the joke, and, recovering, he said:—

"Well, Mr. President, the rascals I have in yonder have been turned out so long that they can come mighty high fooling you."

"The 'Bishop' won, but he never told the Illinois delegation how it came about that they got to shake Grover's hand."

section. By cutting down the hill and making Forty-second street level at that point it will pass under Fifth avenue. The subway is so deep at that point that it will not interfere. Not only the street, but the sidewalks are to be lowered, involving a change in the store fronts at that place. The stores, however, will gain a basement story which they otherwise would not have.

Stairways will lead up to Fifth avenue from Forty-second street below, but there will be no driveway, so that carriages coming up Fifth avenue bound for the Grand Central Station will have to turn up Forty-first street, as they now do, to avoid the delay and congestion.

The retaining wall of the library grounds will extend from the bridge westward about two hundred and twenty-five feet down Forty-second street, where there will be a broad flight of steps leading up to the Fifth avenue level. Under the bridge, on Forty-second street, will be comfort stations and newsstands. The estimate for the work complete is \$389,590, including the retaining wall in Forty-second street, which is part of the library grounds and which the city will have to build. Mr. Hastings, the originator of the plan, in speaking of it, said:—

Congested Fifth Avenue.

"The usual congestion on Fifth avenue, I believe, is largely due to the crowded condition of Forty-second street. To exaggerate the condition of things—if one were to imagine a stone wall or an occasional rope across the avenue, traffic would be not only arrested at that place but at its whole length. This is practically what occurs at Forty-second street and Fifth avenue. This street is probably the most crowded crosstown street in the city, as it is the only through crosstown street between Fortieth and Forty-eighth streets.

"To relieve this congestion would do more for the avenue at its entire length than even the removal of the stoops, as has been suggested in order to widen the road bed.

"It was while studying the elevations of the New York Public Library that my attention was called to the peculiar conditions of the topography of this section of New York, the sidewalk opposite the main entrance of the library, on Forty-second street, being approximately eleven feet lower than the sidewalk in Fifth avenue and Forty-first street.

"On further looking into the matter of grades I noticed that Forty-second street is at its highest at Fifth avenue—you go

PROPOSED DEPRESSION OF 42ND ST UNDER FIFTH AVE.

down hill both east and west and you go up hill on Fifth avenue when you leave Forty-second street to go south—so that by leveling Forty-second street and at the same time leveling Fifth avenue and making the two streets practically horizontal, Fifth avenue would pass over Forty-second street.

In Harmony with the Library.

"Such a treatment would, in my opinion, lend very great interest to the approach to the library, and could in design be made absolutely of the same character, and such a bridge would make a very monumental entrance to the plaza which New York is to have in front of the Public Library.

"I cannot help feeling that New York has suffered already too much from the fact that natural conditions have not been studied from an architectural point of view. We have built up natural grades and we have made cuts for streets through natural grades as though we were building railroads through the wilds of the West, looking only upon things from a quantitative point of view and rarely from a qualitative point of view.

"We seldom take advantage of the natural conditions with design looking for the solution of a problem. The question of design should always come first in the lay out of streets, the building of bridges, &c., and construction follows. The architect and engineer should work hand in hand.

"We have generally reversed this order of things, the architect being called in for a detail of a balustrade or a lamp post on a bridge or to do things he is told to do in mere matters of detail. On this account, if such a scheme as this, which I believe to be thoroughly practicable, were once carried out it would do a great deal as a precedent for the future development and beautifying of New York."

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